

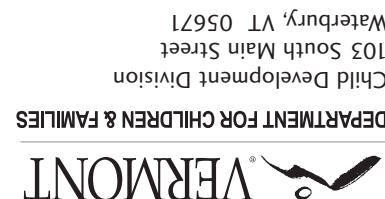


This newsletter provides important information about your baby through infancy and early childhood. You will receive 10 issues of this newsletter before your child reaches age 5. Other publications for parents include *Path to Parenthood* and *Growing Up Healthy*. If you have any questions about the content of this newsletter or are interested in a home visit or other assistance, please call one of the Vermont Department Health district offices listed below:

Barre.....	802-479-4200	Newport.....	802-334-6707
	888-253-8786		800-952-2945
Bennington.....	802-447-3531	Rutland.....	802-786-5811
	800-637-7347		888-253-8802
Brattleboro.....	802-257-2880	St. Albans.....	802-524-7970
	888-253-8805		888-253-8801
Burlington.....	802-863-7323	St. Johnsbury.....	802-748-5151
	888-253-8803		800-952-2936
Middlebury.....	802-388-4644	Springfield.....	802-885-5778
	888-253-8804		888-296-8151
Morrisville.....	802-888-7447	White River Junction	802-295-8820
	888-253-8798		888-253-8799

Your health insurance benefits include many preventive services at no charge to you: regular health check-ups and dental visits; immunizations (shots); vision and hearing checks; and child safety and developmental guidance.

Information in these newsletters was adapted from the following sources: *Touchpoints*, T. Berry Brazelton, MD; *Babytalk*; *Link Letters*, Healthy Steps; *Baby Your Baby*, Utah Department of Health; *Cradle Crier*, University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension; *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child*, American Academy of Pediatrics; and *Path To Parenthood*, Vermont Department for Children and Families.



growing up healthy

A newsletter from Healthy Babies, Kids & Families

4 YEARS



Your child is now 4.

He's talkative, full of excitement, and able to tell an involved story or discuss something that's happened to him. His energy will seem boundless. He will frequently

ask "Why," "When," "What," and "How." At times, you may find his behavior frustrating and challenging, 4-year-olds frequently test the limits of parents and siblings. One minute, he'll seem secure and overconfident; the next, insecure and whiny. But he will respond well to routines and clearly stated rules. Around age 4, you'll probably also notice a tremendous spurt in your child's already vivid imagination. His experiences this year will help prepare him to successfully enter kindergarten and the middle childhood years.

General Development

Now that he's able to dress and undress himself, and maintain bowel and bladder control (although he may not stay dry at night), your child will feel very grown-up.

While he's still pretty self-centered, he's also sensitive to the feelings of others. He can identify emotions like happiness, sadness, anger, anxiety, and fear. Now that he can play with other children he'll start to make friends, instead of just playing beside them.

Your child will be curious about his own body and those of the opposite sex. He'll become more modest and desire some privacy. He'll be able recite his first and last names, sing songs and draw a rough depiction of a person. He'll love to talk about his daily activities—playing make-believe

or dress-up and talking will be a favorite activity (you may hear about his imaginary "friends").

Although he'll be great at running, climbing, swinging, sliding and jumping—he'll still need plenty of rest and quiet play and special time with just you.

Eating and Physical Activity

Your child may begin to imitate his friends' and siblings' food likes and dislikes. Continue to offer your child a variety of nutritious foods and let him decide what and how much to eat. Fruit, vegetables, yogurt, cheese and crackers are better snack alternatives than candy, chips or soft drinks. Allow time each day for fun, active and creative play.

Aggression or Shyness

Some children are naturally aggressive. When frustrated, they may kick, bite or even hit. Help your child handle his anger by being firm and consistent; help him find ways to calm himself down.

Other children are naturally shy and fearful about new people and situations. If pushed too hard they may get upset, and will only cling to you more. Although his clinginess may frustrate you, challenging it will only make your shy child more insecure. Make sure you give him the extra time he needs to feel comfortable in a new situation, and let him hold your hand if he wants to. During his first several years, a timid child may go through several stages of being more or less shy—much of this is normal and age appropriate behavior.

(Adapted from *Caring for Your Baby and Young Toddler*, American Academy of Pediatrics.)



If you have concerns, about aggressive or shy behavior, discuss them with your health care provider (your family doctor, nurse practitioner, or clinic).

Discipline

There are times when your 4-year-old will behave in ways that seem to be too aggressive. When this happens, try to figure out what triggered his aggressive behavior and give him a chance to change his feelings into more acceptable behavior. Guidelines for discipline include:

- Model behaviors for your child; showing him how to settle a conflict could be more instructive than words.
- After a time-out is over, help him use words to explain what it was all about. Ask his advice about what might help next time.
- Use a time-out for a brief period only. After it's over, hug him and explain why it was necessary.

(From: Brazelton, TB. (1992) Touchpoints: the essential reference. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.)

Fears

Although your child's new abilities bring greater independence, his awareness of his capabilities can bring new fears.

Preschoolers often have many fears and phobias. You may notice your child is afraid of loud noises—like dogs barking—or that's he's starting to talk about monsters. He may go through a period of not wanting to go to unfamiliar places. He might even develop fears about things he used to be okay with, like riding on elevators. Rest assured, his fears and phobias are all a part of his normal development.

If your child has fears, try to find out more about them and what would help him be less afraid. Could they be caused by a real event, or a change in your family's life? Limit his TV time. At bedtime, a time when children often become afraid, a routine, a special blanket or toy, and a night light may help.

Safety and Injury Prevention

As your child becomes more independent, make sure you pay constant attention to these and other safety issues:

- ▲ Make an emergency plan and practice it with family members. To start planning, get a Family Readiness Overview Booklet at www.broward.org/disaster/epi00902.pdf or a VT Emergency Preparedness Workbook at www.dps.state.vt.us/vem (or 1-800-347-0488)

- ▲ Always use a car seat or booster seat.

- ▲ Keep matches and cigarette lighters out of your child's reach.

- ▲ Avoid guns in your home. If you have guns, lock both the guns and the ammunition in separate places. Avoid play with toy guns and shooting aimed at people.

- ▲ Use smoke detectors and test them at least once a year.

- ▲ Teach animal safety: tell your child not to run towards or away from animals, and never try to stop a dog or cat fight.

- ▲ Teach your child not to talk to strangers or get into a stranger's car.

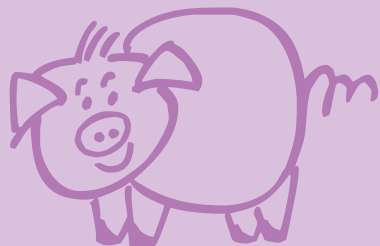
- ▲ Continue to teach water safety and never leave your child unsupervised.

- ▲ Always use a helmet when riding on a bike.

- ▲ Avoid exposing your child to too much sun; and use sun block.

- ▲ If you think your child has swallowed a poison call the Poison Center. Do not give him anything to drink before you call.

Poison Center: 1-800-222-1222



Environmental Spotlight: Cleaners and Disinfectants

Many commercial cleaners contain toxic substances that can burn eyes or skin on contact. Without proper air flow, their harmful vapors can also cause injury. Always make sure you follow all the directions on every product label.

You may be able to make your own cleaners and disinfectants from a variety of common, potentially less harmful, household ingredients. In addition to making your child's environment safer, most of these less harmful alternatives will save you money.

All cleaners—whether store bought or home-made—should be kept out of your child's reach. In addition, clearly label your home-made cleaners, and always wash your hands after using them.

Homemade Cleaners

- **Drain Cleaner:** Pour a 1/2 cup of baking soda down the sink. Add at least a cup of vinegar. The mixture will start to fizz; put the cover over the drain. Rinse the drain with a mixture of boiling water and salt—you may have to repeat this a few times.
- **Toilet Bowl Cleaner:** Sprinkle baking soda around the inside of the toilet bowl; then clean with a toilet brush. Also, try letting white vinegar sit for a few minutes in the bowl before cleaning with the toilet brush.
- **Laundry Detergent:** Substantially reduce the amount of commercial detergent you use—just by adding baking soda. If you use liquid detergent, add a 1/2 cup of baking soda at the beginning of the wash. If you're using powdered detergent, add 1/2 cup of baking soda during the rinse cycle. Baking soda softens the water, which increases the strength of your detergent.
- **Window Cleaner:** Put 3 tablespoons vinegar per 1 quart water in a spray bottle.
- **Kitchen Cleanser:** Use baking soda on non-scratch surfaces, and a vinegar and water mixture on other surfaces.
- **Tub and Tile Cleaner:** Mix 1 and 2/3 cup baking soda, 1/2 cup liquid soap, 1/2 cup water, and lastly, 2 tablespoons vinegar (If you add the vinegar too early, it will react with the baking soda). Then apply, wipe, and scrub.

(Recipes from the Chittenden Solid Waste District and EPA)

